Progress towards a national AMO training package

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ABSTRACT

There are still a lot of people out there who think anyone can be an Animal Management Officer (AMO) and it's no big deal. And there are still a lot of people out there who think AMOs don't need to know much to be able to the job they have to do. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Those who have never walked a mile in the shoes of an AMO can never really understand it. In terms of social impact, the job is very important indeed. If quality of life in Australian suburbs matters to local government, then UAM is a job that needs to be done well. The fact is that AMOs need and indeed deserve, good training.

The AMO training package workshop at this conference will be managed by a Rural Training Council of Australia (RTCA) training industry facilitator. This will be where the training industry meets the AMO industry for the biggest step so far in getting a dedicated, nationally accredited AMO training package up and running.

INTRODUCTION

There are still a lot of people out there who think anyone can be an AMO and it's no big deal. And there are still a lot of people out there who think AMOs don't need to know much to be able to do the job they have to do.

The reality, of course, is exactly the opposite. The job is tough. The job is demanding. In terms of social impact, the job is very important indeed. If quality of life in Australian suburbs matters to local government, then UAM is a job that needs to be done well.

Working towards the introduction of properly integrated, nationally accredited, industry relevant AMO training is a major mission for the UAM movement at this time.

In 1999, the Urban Animal Management Advisory Group (UAM AG) undertook a review of Animal Management Officer training options that were available throughout Australia. The findings of this review were that, although there were courses around, they did not allow portability of qualifications nationally and because of the differing levels of delivery appeared disjointed.

Training package in UAM offers Australian local authorities:
- Traineeships in UAM
- Portability of UAM qualifications
- Combinations of 'on' and 'off' job training
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Uniform standards of training
- Career paths in UAM and regulatory services
- Industry led competency components

The idea of promoting a single, coordinated, nationally accredited training package for AMOs is essentially to improve the standard of UAM across the board in Australia.

Legend			
AMO =	Animal Management Officer	RTO =	Registered Training Organisation
ANTA =	Australian National Training Authority	RSO =	Regulatory Services Officer
AQF =	Australian Qualification Framework	UAM =	Urban Animal Management
NTF =	National Training Framework	UAM AG =	Urban Animal Management Advisory Group
RTCA =	Rural training Council of Australia	VET =	Vocational Education and Training

At the time of that first 'scoping' meeting in Perth in 1999, the UAM AG considered the whole issue of AMO training under the headings of objectives, stakeholders, suggested structure and UAM task structure as follows:

- **Training objectives:**

a. to develop a relevant national accredited in-service training program;
b. to offer a career path to AMOs; and
c. to ensure that AMOs are equipped to satisfactorily meet the public service demand in animal management.

- **Training stakeholders (whose lives is this going to improve?)**

a. primary stakeholders — in-service AMOs
b. secondary stakeholders —

1. State and Local Government;
2. community at large in total; and
3. pet owners.

- **Suggested training structure**

1. *Foundation competencies* in the form of a set course starting with 3-4 days in formal lecture/workshop session with additional Work Centered Learning (WCL) supervised study and assignments to constitute AQF Certificate 3

2. *Advanced competencies* made up into a series of separate 3 day courses eg Capture Gun Course, Handling Large Animals Course, Euthanasia Technicians Course, AM Best Practice Course, Pound Management Course, Strategic Planning in AM Course, Animal Training /Remedial Training Course, Legal Process Course, Local Government Course etc with four to make up AQF Certificate 4 and another four to make up AQF Certificate 5.

- **Animal management tasks**

The Perth meeting was of the opinion that animal management tasks could be structured in a 3 x 2 table as follows with foundation competencies being seen as AQF Certificate Level 3 and advanced competencies as AQF Certificate Level 4.

	People	Animals	Legislation
Foundation competencies	• Conflict resolution • Stress management • Dealing with difficult clients • Investigation techniques • Verbal judo • Neighbourhood disputes methods • Mediation • Communication (verbal and non-verbal) • Critical incident management • Public education • Occupational Health and Safety • Pound operations • Information access	• First aid • Maintaining equipment • Occupational health and safety • Animal identification • Breed identification • Loading and handling • Confinement and restraint • Animal care and control • Behaviour (barking, aggression, wanderings) • Zoonotics • Disease identification • Identification of disease • Pound operations Information access	• Understanding legislation • Courtroom procedure • Public/personal/council liability • Taking evidence • Relevant legislation • Prosecution case handling • Process infringements • Occupational Health and Safety • Core laws • Preparing a brief • Pound operations • Information access
Advanced	• Pound management • Team management • Marketing • Governance • Principles of service delivery • Strategic pet planning • Best practice (governance, performance indication, benchmarking)	• Euthanasia technicians course • Pound management • Animal training • Microchip implementation • Capture guns	• Pound management • Prosecution case presentation • Interpretation of legislation

INDUSTRY BASED TRAINING PACKAGE

Having made this start to the business of building a national AMO training curriculum, the UAM AG placed the matter of progressing the issue in the hands of all the delegates who attended the specially convened AMO training workshops at the national UAM conference in Hobart (August, 2000).

The reason this next curriculum/competency step had been given over to delegates at that conference was to ensure the security of industry relevance in the early stages of the development of the proposed training package. It is fair to say that the best training by the best trainers is still useless if it fails to be relevant to the real vocational needs of the targeted trainees themselves. The content and structure of useful training packages always has to be industry driven and the national UAM conference that year provided the best possible opportunity to gather the ideas and the needs of the people who were working in this field of employment at that time.

It was indeed gratifying to see Hobart conference delegates so enthusiastically pitching in to the workshop business of identifying and grouping all the various tasks and skills that are needed in the occupation of AMOs.

Having Tony Audley from the RTCA in attendance was an extra bonus. Tony's attendance was significant in that meeting the needs of ANTA's VET vision is just as important as meeting the 'occupational skilling' needs of people employed in animal management.

The point being made here is that the content and structure of useful training packages ultimately has to be the product of a joint venture between two separate industries — those who do the AMO work and those who do the AMO training.

The list of skills/competencies/tasks listed below is a distillation of the material gathered from both of the AMO training workshops at the Hobart conference. The list here sheds considerable light on just why UAM is gradually being seen in a whole new light by increasing numbers of more enlightened local authorities around Australia. It also sheds considerable light on just why the RTCA is interested in helping to put AMO training onto a proper footing.

SKILLS LIST FROM HOBART CONFERENCE

1 Stress management

2 Conflict resolution

3 Dealing with difficult clients

4 Investigating techniques

5 Verbal judo

6 Neighbourhood dispute resolution

7 Mediation

8 Communication (verbal, non verbal)

9 Critical incident management

10 Public education

11 Occupational health and safety

12 Pound operations

13 First aid

14 Maintaining equipment

15 Animal identification

16 Breed identification

17 Loading and handling animals

18 Confinement and restraint of animals

19 Animal care and control

20 Behaviour (barking, aggression)

21 Disease (health, hygiene, zoonotics)

22 Understanding legislation

23 Courtroom Procedure

24 Public/personal/council liability

25 Legal procedures (taking evidence, local laws, prosecution, process infringements, preparing a brief, interpretation of legislation)

26 Marketing

27 Working with others

28 Governance

29 Principles of service delivery

30 Strategic pet planning

31 Registration and identification

32 Microchips

33 Computer skills

34 Filing

35 Phone answering

36 Money handling

37 Vehicle driving

38 Use, maintenance, cleaning and care of equipment

39 Report writing

The content and structure of useful training packages ultimately has to be the product of a joint venture between two separate industries — those who do the AMO work and those who do the AMO training

The list here sheds considerable light on just why UAM is gradually being seen in a whole new light by increasing numbers of more enlightened local authorities around Australia

The fact is that AMOs need and indeed deserve good training

Those who have never walked a mile in the shoes of an AMO can never really understand it

46   Understanding HCA bond

47   Wildlife handling

48   Quarantine procedures

49   Multicultural information and attitude

50   Enforcement

51   UAM business management (team management, marketing, principles of service delivery, strategic planning for UAM, protocol/policy routines)

52   The four pillars of UAM (regulation, education, information, facilitation)

53   Best practice in UAM(governance, performance indication, benchmarking)

54   Stress management

55   Trauma/post trauma counselling

56   Understanding the seven habits of highly effective people

57   Specialist local government course

58   Specialist large animal handling course

59   Specialist euthanasia technicians course

60   Specialist pound operations/management course

61   Specialist animal behaviour/training course

62   Specialist capture guns course

> The idea of being part of a new and carefully integrated national training package that specifically accommodates the needs of local government AMOs is very exciting indeed

HOBART CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that there is a lot more to the business of UAM than meets the casual or ill informed eye. Those who have never walked a mile in the shoes can never really understand it. It can be argued quite convincingly that UAM is in fact probably the most demanding of all task packages on the local government job list. The fact is that AMOs need and indeed deserve good training. The message from delegates attending both the Gold Coast conference and the Hobart UAM conference was very clear — it is high time AMO training in Australia got sorted.

Until now, vocational training for those who work in pet retail, zoos, pounds and shelters, animal management, animal laboratories etc has been like a dog's breakfast — all over the shop — just a rag bag of odds and ends of separate course work.

There has, so far, been little sharing of generic material and virtually no coordination of occupational streaming within this broad general area of VET. There has also been no portability of qualifications, no inter-stream consistency or efficiency and no equality of qualification evaluation. Pretty much everything that the Ministerial Council and ANTA are seeking to achieve is waiting to happen for VET in the animal care industry sector.

The RTCA's investigation of VET for animal care industries in Australia has given UAM an opportunity — a 'foot in the door' so to speak. We are not about to let the opportunity pass us by. This door of opportunity won't open again in the foreseeable future. This is UAM's chance to get hooked up to the power of NTF and AQF.

Now that the development of an animal care training package has been investigated and has been approved by ANTA, it is expected that existing (fragmented) course-work for AMO training will be phased out as the new coursework is constructed and made available.

PREPARATION FOR THE MELBOURNE CONFERENCE

At this (Melbourne August 2001) conference, the UAM AG hopes to push ahead with the first 'official' preliminary stage in the development of a fully accredited, AQF aligned, career path qualification framework for people employed in UAM.

It has often been said that while a well trained AMO can make a good general regulatory services officer, someone trained only in regulatory services can never make a good AMO. It is fully expected that the dedicated AMO training package envisaged will smoothly integrate where necessary with other training for council officers employed in the more general capacity of overall local authority regulatory services. Such 'extra qualification' linkages are quite easily catered for within the context of ANTA's current NTF and AQF capability. At the end of the day, once training programs are all linked up properly, people who have had the opportunity to become fully qualified AMO/RSOs will be highly valued and actively sought local authority employees.

An RTCA training industry facilitator will manage the AMO training package workshop at this conference. UAM has contacted a number of established service providers throughout Australia to ensure they have an opportunity for input at this crucial stage. This will be where the training industry meets the AMO industry for the biggest step so far in getting a complete and dedicated AMO training package up and running. The Melbourne conference workshop is expected to focus on putting course components in the right places in the context of due training process and essential training issues. The workshop will concentrate on 'tagging' and 'posting' groups of 'skills list' items into the format of NTF Certificates 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The following arrangement of the Hobart (2000) conference workshop skills list is a draft structure, which has been prepared by the UAM AG to provide a solid starting point for the Melbourne (2001) conference workshop. It will be up to the delegates (with the help of the facilitator) to get this draft rearranged into its most appropriate industry relevant shape.

Certificate Level II enables the individual with this qualification to:

- Demonstrate *basic operational knowledge* in a *moderate* range of areas.

- Apply a *defined* range of skills.

- Apply *known solutions* to a limited range of predictable problems.

- Perform a range of tasks where *choice between a limited range of options* is required.

- *Assess* and *record* information from varied sources

- Take *limited responsibility* for own outputs in work and learning.

Characteristics of competencies at this level include:

- Performance of a prescribed range of functions involving known routines and procedures and some accountability for the quality of outcomes.

- Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and skills would prepare a person to perform in a range of varied activities or knowledge applications where there is a clearly defined range of contexts in which the choice of actions required is usually clear and there is a limited complexity in the range of options to be applied.

- Applications may include some complex or non-routine activities involving individual responsibility or autonomy and/or collaboration with others as part of a group or team.

AQF LEVEL II
Work at this level is likely to be under routine supervision with routine checking. Progression to the next Level is achieved when the individual is competent to carry out the daily routines unsupervised and is beginning to have input into decision making. Progression can also be achieved by the individual accessing recognised training or through RPL.
Animal Management Officer roles at Certificate Level II:

Communication — verbal and non verbal OH&S principles First Aid Use, maintenance, cleaning and care of equipment Animal identification Breed identification Loading and handling of animals Confinement and restraint of animals Animal care and control Disease — hygiene	Understanding legislation Legal procedures — taking evidence, local laws, preparing a brief of evidence, interpretation of legislation. Working with others Computer skills Filing Phone answering Money handling Vehicle driving Report writing

Certificate III enables the individual with this qualification to:

- Demonstrate some *relevant theoretical knowledge*.

- Apply a range of *well-developed skills*.

- Apply *known solutions* to a variety of *predictable problems.*

- Perform processes that require a range of *well-developed skills* where some *discretion and judgement* is required.

- Interpret available information, using *discretion and judgement.*

- Take *responsibility for own outputs* in work and learning.

- Take *limited responsibility* for the *output of others*.

Characteristics of competencies at this level include:

- Performance of a defined range of skilled operations, usually within a range of broader related activities involving known routines, methods and procedures, where some discretion and judgement is required in the selection of equipment, services or contingency measures and within known time constraints.

- Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and competencies would cover selecting, adapting and transferring skills and knowledge to a new environment and providing technical advice and some leadership in resolutions of specific problems. This would be applied across a range of roles in a variety of contexts with some complexity in the extent and choice of options available.

- Applications may involve some responsibility for others. Participation in teams including group or team coordination may be involved.

AQF LEVEL III
Personnel at this Level will generally be working without supervision and will need to be accurate observers, analyse what they see, draw conclusions and act accordingly.

Animal Management Officer roles at Certificate Level III:	
Conflict resolution Dealing with difficult clients Investigation techniques Verbal judo Neighbourhood dispute resolution Mediation Disease — health and zoonotics Courtroom procedure Public/personal/council liability Legal procedures — prosecution/process infringements, interpretation of legislation	Principles of service delivery Registration and identification Microchips Negotiation skills Customer service/interpersonal skills First aid — animals/people Passive self defence Reading body language Understanding HCA bond Wildlife handling Enforcement

Certificate Level IV enables the individual with this qualification to:

- Demonstrate understanding of a *broad knowledge base* incorporating some *theoretical concepts*.

- Apply solutions to a *defined range of unpredictable problems*.

- *Identify* and *apply skill and knowledge* areas to a wide variety of *contexts with depth in some areas.*

- *Identify, analyse and evaluate information from a variety of sources*.

- Take responsibility for own outputs in relation to *specified quality standards*.

- Take *limited* responsibility for the *quantity and quality* of the output of others.

Characteristics of competencies at this level include:

- Performance of a broad range of skilled applications including requirements to evaluate and analyse current practices, develop new criteria and procedures for performing current practices and provision of some leadership and guidance to others in the application and planning of the skills.

- Breadth, depth and complexity of knowledge and competencies would cover a broad range of varied activities or applications in a wide variety of contexts most of which are complex and non-routine. Leadership and guidance are involved when organising activities of self and others as well as contributing to technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature.

- Applications involve responsibility for, and limited organisation of others.

AQF LEVEL IV	
Individuals having demonstrated the ability to conduct workplace support operations will progress to AQF Level IV on completion of appropriate training, or with suitable recognition of prior learning. A certified Animal Management Officer having completed the core units at AQF Level IV may pursue an extended role in specialist areas.	
Animal Management Officer roles at Certificate Level IV	
Stress management Critical incident management Public education Pound operations Behaviour – barking/aggression Governance **Extended units:** Specialist local government course. Specialist large animal handling course. Specialist euthanasia technicians course.	Anti-discrimination/cross-culture Multicultural information and attitude Quarantine procedures The four pillars of UAM – regulation/education/facilitation/information Specialist pound operations/management course.Specialist animal behaviour/training course.Specialist capture gun course.

Certificate Level V, or Diploma Level, enables the individual to:

- Demonstrate understanding of a broad knowledge base incorporating theoretical concepts, *with substantial depth in some areas*.

- *Analyse and plan* approaches to *technical problems or management requirements*.

- *Transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of situations*.

- Evaluate information using it to *forecast for planning or research* purposes.

- Take responsibility for own outputs in relation to *broad* quantity and quality parameters.

- Take *some* responsibility for the *achievement of groups outcomes*.

Characteristics of competencies at this Level include:

- The self-directed application of knowledge and skills, with substantial depth in some areas where judgement is required in planning and selecting appropriate equipment, services and techniques for self and others.

- Breadth, depth and complexity covering planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skills or knowledge applications across a broad range of technical and/or management requirements, evaluation and co-ordination.

- Applications involve participation in development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organising others. It may include participation in teams including teams concerned with planning and evaluation functions. Group or team co-ordination may be involved.

AQF LEVEL V/DIPLOMA
AQF Level V personnel would include managers, supervisors or technical officers of Animal Management Units – usually achieving this through extensive experience and/or by undertaking further formal management training. This level and above is differentiated from the lower levels by the individual assuming the responsibility of making the actual AMO management decisions based on information supplied by Level II, III and IV staff, local government middle management and community members.
Animal Management Officer roles at Certificate Level V

Strategic pet planning UAM business management – team management/marketing/principles of service delivery/strategic planning for UAM/protocol and policy routines/financials Recruitment and training	Best practice in UAM — governance/performance indicating/benchmarking Trauma/post-trauma counselling Understanding the seven habits of highly effective people

DRAFT COMPETENCIES WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Suggested Competency Unit Title	AQFLevel II	AQFLevel III	AQF Level IV	AQF Level V
Communication	✓			
Occupational Health and Safety	✓			
First Aid	✓			
Use, maintenance, cleaning and care of equipment	✓			
Animal identification	✓			
Breed identification	✓			
Loading and handling of animals	✓			
Confinement and restraint of animals	✓			
Animal care and control	✓			
Disease — hygiene	✓			
Understanding legislation	✓			
Legal procedures (taking evidence, local laws, preparing a brief of evidence, interpretation of legislation)	✓			
Working with others	✓			
Office skills (computer skills, filing, phone answering, money handling, vehicle driving, report writing)	✓			
Conflict resolution		✓		
Dealing with difficult clients		✓		
Investigation techniques		✓		
Verbal judo		✓		
Neighbourhood dispute resolution		✓		
Mediation		✓		
Disease – health and hygiene		✓		
Courtroom procedure		✓		
Public/personal/council liability		✓		
Legal procedures (prosecutions, process infringements, interpretation of legislation)		✓		
Principles of service delivery		✓		

Registration and identification		✓		
Microchips		✓		
Negotiation skills		✓		
Customer service/interpersonal skills		✓		
First aid — animals/people		✓		
Passive self defence		✓		
Reading body language		✓		
Understanding HCA bond		✓		
Wildlife handling		✓		
Enforcement		✓		
Stress management			✓	
Critical incident management			✓	
Public education			✓	
Pound operations			✓	
Behaviour (barking, aggression)			✓	
Governance			✓	
Anti-discrimination/cross-culture			✓	
Multicultural information and attitude			✓	
Quarantine procedures			✓	
The four pillars of UAM (regulation, education, facilitation and information)			✓	
Specialist local government course EXTENDED			✓	
Specialist large animal handling course EXTENDED			✓	
Specialist euthanasia technicians course EXTENDED			✓	
Specialist animal behaviour/training course EXTENDED			✓	
Specialist capture gun course EXTENDED			✓	
Strategic pet planning				✓
UAM business management (team management, marketing, principles of service delivery, strategic planning for UAM, protocol and policy routines, financials				✓
Recruitment and training				✓
Best practice in UAM (governance, performance indicating, benchmarking)				✓
Trauma/post-trauma counselling				✓
Understanding the seven habits of highly effective people				✓

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Dick has been heavily involved in urban animal management for about twenty years now. He has been a member of the Urban Animal Management Advisory Group since its beginning in 1992 and is currently the Convenor of that national advisory group.